

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03 TRSE-00

XMB-02 OPIC-03 LAB-04 EPG-02 SIL-01 OMB-01 /086 W

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P 302215Z JUN 77

FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3976

INFO AMCONSUL MONTREAL

ALL OTHER AMCONSULS CANADA POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 OTTAWA 05786

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, CA

SUBJECT: JEAN CHRETIEN TO HEAD QUEBEC LIBERAL PARTY?

1. SUMMARY. JEAN CHRETIEN, FEDERAL MINISTER, INDUSTRY, TRADE AND COMMERCE, HAS PUBLICLY CONVEYED HIS INTEREST IN ASSUMING LEADERSHIP OF QUEBEC LIBERAL PARTY. POSITION WILL DEMAND MUCH FOR SUCCESSFUL TENURE. NEW QUEBEC LIBERAL LEADER MUST BE TOUGH, CHARISMATIC INDIVIDUAL, CAPABLE OF RALLYING UNCOMMITTED QUEBECOIS BEHIND A "MADE-IN-QUEBEC" FEDERALIST OPTION (NOT CARBON COPY OF OTTAWA POSITION) AND LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM OFFERING ATTRACTIVE ALTERNATIVE TO PARTY QUEBECOIS (PQ) PROGRAM. LATTER IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT SINCE MANY BELIEVE PQ DEMISE BEST BROUGHT ABOUT IN PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS RATHER THAN BY RESULTS OF REFERENDUMS ON QUEBEC INDEPENDENCE. FEDERALIST POSITION, THEREFORE, CAN BE ONLY ONE OF RANGE OF POLICIES OFFERED BY NEW LIBERAL LEADERSHIP TO CONVINCE QUEBEC VOTER THAT PROVINCE BETTER SERVED BY LIBERALS. CHRETIEN WILL ENCOUNTER TOUGH OBSTACLES IN MEASURING UP TO THESE STANDARDS. HE HAS, HOWEVER, RESOURCEFULNESS AND POLITICAL ACUMEN IN ABUNDANCE AND, IN VIEW OF MANY, IS BEST MAN FOR JOB. END SUMMARY.

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2. LENDING SUPPORT TO RUMORS OF PAST SEVERAL MONTHS, JUNE 27 LE DEVOIR RAN HEADLINE ARTICLE REPORTING THAT FEDERAL MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, TRADE AND COMMERCE JEAN CHRETIEN HAS EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO RUN FOR LEADERSHIP OF QUEBEC PROVINCIAL LIBERALS IF THE PARTY REGULARS FEEL HE IS BEST MAN FOR JOB. ARTICLE WAS BASED ON WHAT CHRETIEN THOUGHT

WAS AN OFF-THE-RECORD INTERVIEW WITH LE DEVOIR EDITOR
CLAUDE RYAN AND CHRETIEN DID NOT INTEND TO INDICATE
PUBLICLY NOW HIS INTEREST IN SEEKING QUEBEC LIBERAL PARTY
LEADERSHIP.

3. WHAT KIND OF LEADERSHIP IS NEEDED? POLITICAL OPPOSITION TO PQ GOVERNMENT, PARTICULARLY BY PROVINCIAL LIBERAL PARTY, HAS BEEN IN COMPLETE DISARRAY SINCE NOVEMBER 15 ELECTION. THERE HAS BEEN A PRESSING NEED IN QUEBEC FOR A TOUGH, CHARISMATIC INDIVIDUAL CAPABLE OF SUPERVISING A NEW AND IMAGINATIVE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM WHICH WOULD CONVINCE QUEBECOIS, AFTER BOURASSA GOVERNMENT MISMANAGEMENT, THAT PQ IS NOT ONLY PARTY CAPABLE OF OFFERING PROVINCE GOOD GOVERNMENT. FURTHER, NEW LEADER MUST CHAMPION A FEDERALIST-ORIENTED PROGRAM CLEARLY DIFFERENT FROM THE TRUDEAU BRAND OF FEDERALISM EMANATING FROM OTTAWA. PROGRAM SHOULD BE DESIGNED TO APPEAL PRIMARILY TO SENTIMENTS OF UNCOMMITTED QUEBECOIS WHO ARE UNCOMFORTABLE WITH INDEPENDENCE AIM OF PQ BUT WHO ARE EQUALLY UNHAPPY WITH EXISTING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN QUEBEC CITY AND OTTAWA.

4. IMPORTANT AS NATIONAL UNITY ISSUE MAY BE, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT LIBERAL LEADER AVOID ALLOWING SEPARATISM DEBATE TO OVERSHADOW RANGE OF OTHER TALENTS HE MUST DISPLAY FOR QUEBEC VOTERS. CHRETIEN BELIEVES (AND EMBASSY SHARES THIS BELIEF) THAT BEST WAY TO THWART SEPARATISM
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THREAT OVER LONG RUN IS BY BEATING PQ IN PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS AND NOT BY DEFEATING INDEPENDENCE BID IN ONE REFERENDUM. FEDERALIST POSITION, EVEN ONE "MADE-IN-QUEBEC", VERSUS A SEPARATIST OPTION WILL NOT BE ENOUGH TO WIN ELECTION AGAINST PQ. THIS WOULD MERELY SERVE TO BIPOLARIZE PROVINCE AND ALLOW PQ TO DOMINATE THEME OF GOOD GOVERNMENT (AS THEY DID NOVEMBER 15). ELECTION VICTORY WILL DEPEND ON VOTER PERCEPTION OF THE BETTER ALTERNATIVE, NOT JUST RE QUEBEC'S POSITION IN CONFEDERATION, BUT IN ABILITY TO PROVIDE GOOD GOVERNMENT ACROSS THE BOARD. NEW LEADER, THEREFORE, MUST REBUILD PARTY AS COMPREHENSIVE ALTERNATIVE AND AVOID APPEARING AS ONE ISSUE, E.G. FEDERALIST-MAN.

5. OBSTACLES IN CHRETIEN'S PATH. WHILE CHRETIEN IS PERSONALLY RESPECTED AND WELL-LIKED IN QUEBEC, QUEBECOIS GENERALLY RESENT A FEDERAL MINISTER'S, PARTICULARLY ONE CLOSE TO TRUDEAU, BEING "PARACHUTED" INTO PROVINCE. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, CHRETIEN COULD OVERCOME THIS NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS "PARACHUTISTS" IF HE STAKED OUT DIFFERENT GROUND FROM TRUDEAU'S ON FEDERAL/PROVINCIAL RELATIONS AND CLEARLY SUPPORTED A GREATER DEGREE OF

AUTONOMY FOR QUEBEC. IN SHORT, HE WOULD HAVE TO DEMONSTRATE HE WAS HIS OWN MAN AND NOT TRUDEAU'S "HIT MAN" IN BATTLE WITH PQ SEPARATISTS. HE COULD REALLY NOT ATTEMPT TO DO SO, HOWEVER, UNTIL AFTER HE HAD LEFT THE TRUDEAU CABINET, AND HE HAS INDICATED THAT HE WOULD PERSONALLY PREFER NOT TO ENTER PROVINCIAL POLITICS UNTIL AFTER THE NEXT FEDERAL ELECTION.

6. ANOTHER OBSTACLE FOR CHRETIEN IS THAT HE WOULD EVENTUALLY HAVE TO PERSUADE A MEMBER OF THE QUEBEC NATIONAL

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ASSEMBLY TO RESIGN A "SAFE" SEAT SO THAT A BY-ELECTION COULD BE HELD FOR HIM TO FILL THE VACANCY. IN ANY CASE, QUEBEC LIBERAL PARTY LEADERSHIP CONVENTION IS EXPECTED TO BE HELD IN FEBRUARY 1978, BUT IT COULD PRESUMABLY BE HELD EARLIER OR LATER IF THE PARTY SO DESIRED.

7. COULD CHRETIEN BE AN EFFECTIVE LEADER OF THE QUEBEC LIBERALS? IN OUR VIEW, HE COULD BE, ASSUMING HE WAS ABLE TO OVERCOME THE ABOVE OBSTACLES AND DEFEAT OTHER COMPETITORS FOR THE POSITION SO CONVINCINGLY AS TO AVOID SUBSEQUENT FACTIONAL BICKERING. IN OTTAWA, CHRETIEN HAS ESTABLISHED REPUTATION AS ONE OF MOST CAPABLE FEDERAL MINISTERS; HE HAS ALSO ESTABLISHED RECORD AS AN ABLE ADMINISTRATOR AND AS A PERSUASIVE AND TOUGH INFIGHTER IN TOP GOVERNMENT CIRCLES. HE HAS, MOREOVER, KEPT HIS FINGER ON THE QUEBEC PULSE BY MAINTAINING EXCELLENT RAPPORT WITH AVERAGE MAN IN QUEBEC STREET. HE IS ALSO CAGEY ENOUGH POLITICALLY TO REALIZE NEED TO PUT DISTANCE BETWEEN HIM-

SELF AND TRUDEAU AND RESOURCEFUL ENOUGH TO DO SO (POSSIBLY WITH TRUDEAU HELP). WE BELIEVE HE IS CAPABLE OF HAMMERING OUT UNIQUELY QUEBEC FEDERALIST POSITION ON NATIONAL UNITY QUESTION AND OF TAPPING LIBERAL AND OTHER NON-PQ TALENT IN CONFIDENTIAL

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DEVELOPING AN ATTRACTIVE ALTERNATIVE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM.

8. SUCCESS IN NEW LIBERAL LEADERSHIP WILL, AS INDICATED ABOVE, REQUIRE GREAT RESOURCEFULNESS, IMAGINATION AND FLEXIBILITY. APPEAL MUST BE BROAD, COUNTERING PQ NOT JUST ON SEPARATISM BUT ON MYRIAD ISSUES INVOLVED IN GOVERNING A PROVINCE. CHRETIEN, IN VIEW OF MANY HERE AND IN QUEBEC, IS "BEST MAN TO TACKLE THE JOB", AN EVALUATION SHARED BY EMBASSY. ENDERS

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